



# Presentation of the experiences of the CUBB-project

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# Innovation of public employment services with focus on user-involvement

- ❶ Two innovation projects made in partnership with 9 municipalities from 2016-2024:
- ❷ **LISES 2016-20** (Local Innovation of Social and Employment Services) 2016-2020. Aalborg University and 6 municipalities. Funded by Innovation Fund Denmark
- ❸ **CUBB 2020-2024**(Center for user involving employment services). Aalborg University and 6 municipalities. Funded by: The Maersk Foundation and the municipalities
- ❹ **CUBB 2.0. 2024-** Financed by the municipalities themselves

See [www.cubb.aau.dk](http://www.cubb.aau.dk)





## The CUBB research team

From right: Karen Breidahl Nielsen, Stine Rasmussen, Tanja Dall, Alberte Alsø Dokkedal, Johanne Grove Dahl, Merete Monrad, Niklas A. Andersen, Helle Bendix Kleif, Mathias Herup Nielsen, Dorte Caswell, Mikkel Bo Madsen, Flemming Larsen



## Why is user involvement (co-creation) a good idea?

- It has **fundamental democratic value**, when citizens are involved in decisions concerning their own lives
- The citizens' **active participation** seems very important for the effects of interventions
- The citizen's **knowledge of their own prerequisites and needs** is crucial for the professional work
- User involvement contributes to the **good working relationship** (work alliance theory)

→ Enhance both efficiency and responsiveness

# The short story about Danish employment policies and its governance

- From 2000 and onwards: **Strong work-oriented (work-first inspired) approach** with an **expanded sanctions regime** and activation based upon **training in companies**
- **A constant expansion of the target group** with inclusion of people who formerly would have been part of social services
- **Full municipal responsibility for the employment services (from 2009)**, while under **strong central control** in relation to finances and performance management (to secure the work-first approach) – a system that has been heavily criticized in the public eye

## Changes during the last 5-7 years:

- **Greater degrees of freedom to the municipalities** (also financially)
- Greater focus on **integrated services, co-production and user involvement** – especially in relation to the group for whom the whip does not work
- New reform with **much greater freedom for the municipalities to design services, minimum requirement in relation to prescribed services and obligations for the unemployed, much softer sanctioning for vulnerable citizens - however followed by huge budget cuts (2.7 billions DKK corresponding to 25% of staff) due to expected less bureaucracy.**

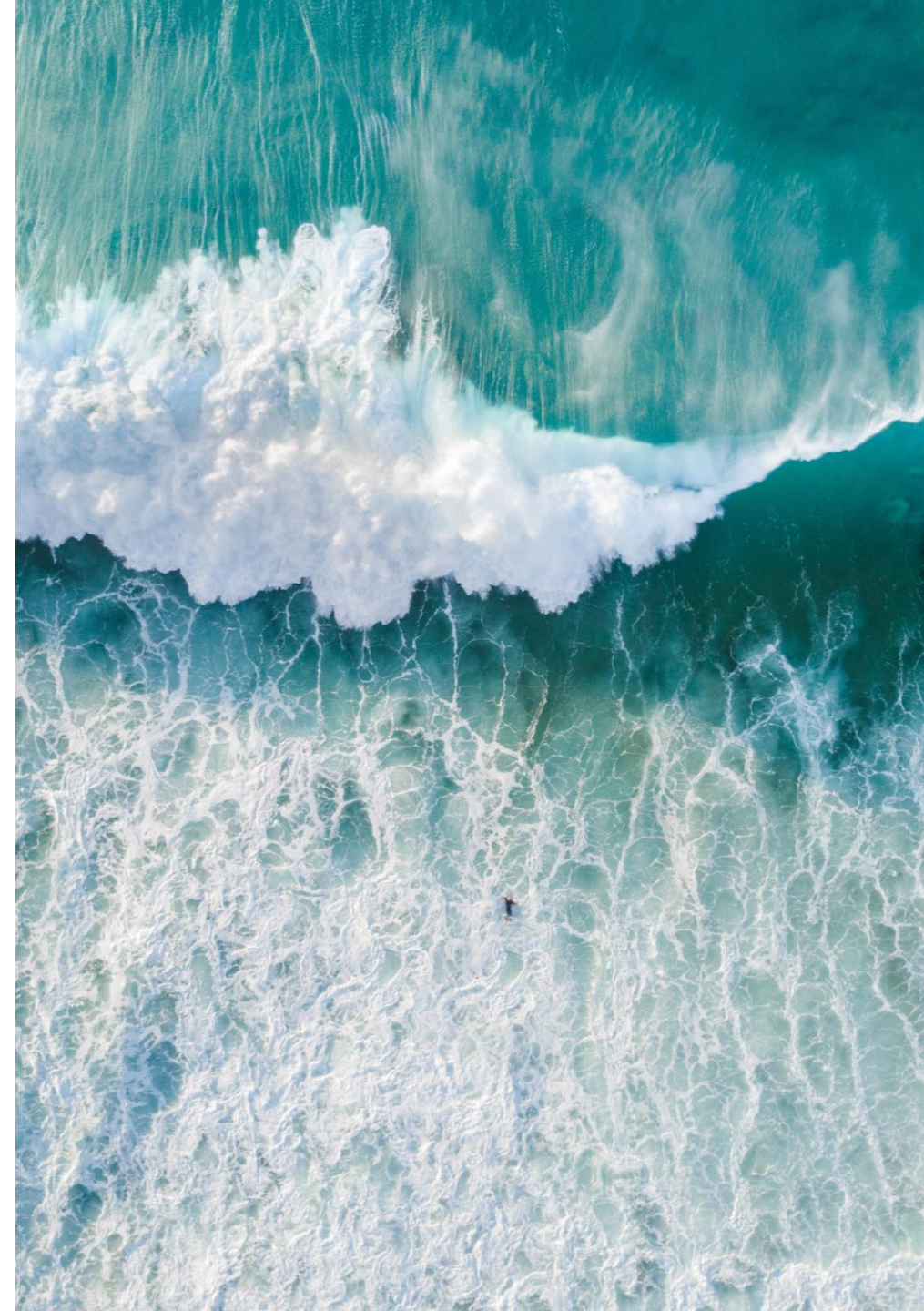
# Therefore, also part of ongoing developments and the reason for CUBB

Two parallel waves:

► **Post-NPM and New Public Governance (Co-production, integrated services, user-involvement, etc.) – BUT HOW?**

► **New locally designed employment policies – from professional operating organizations to learning organizations – municipal independence? How build up local capacity to design and deliver effective and user involving services?** (The municipalities are most comfortable staying in the logic of production with high legality)

**CUBB contributes with proposals for how such innovation and change can take place**



# SYSTEM INNOVATION

Contrary to the trend of testing simple interventions (evidence-based), we work from an understanding **that systemic and complex problems require systemic and complex solutions**



# From single-interventions (projects) to system innovation



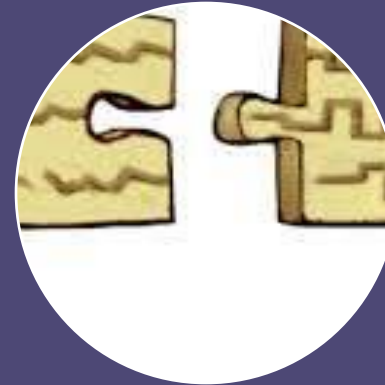
**The perspective  
and voice of the  
client**



**The user-  
involving  
meeting and  
conversation**



**Employer  
engagement**



**Development  
of integrated  
services  
across  
sectors,  
departments  
and units**



**Local policy,  
organizational  
strategies and  
management**

**Developing user-involving employment services**

# Data in LISES og CUBB

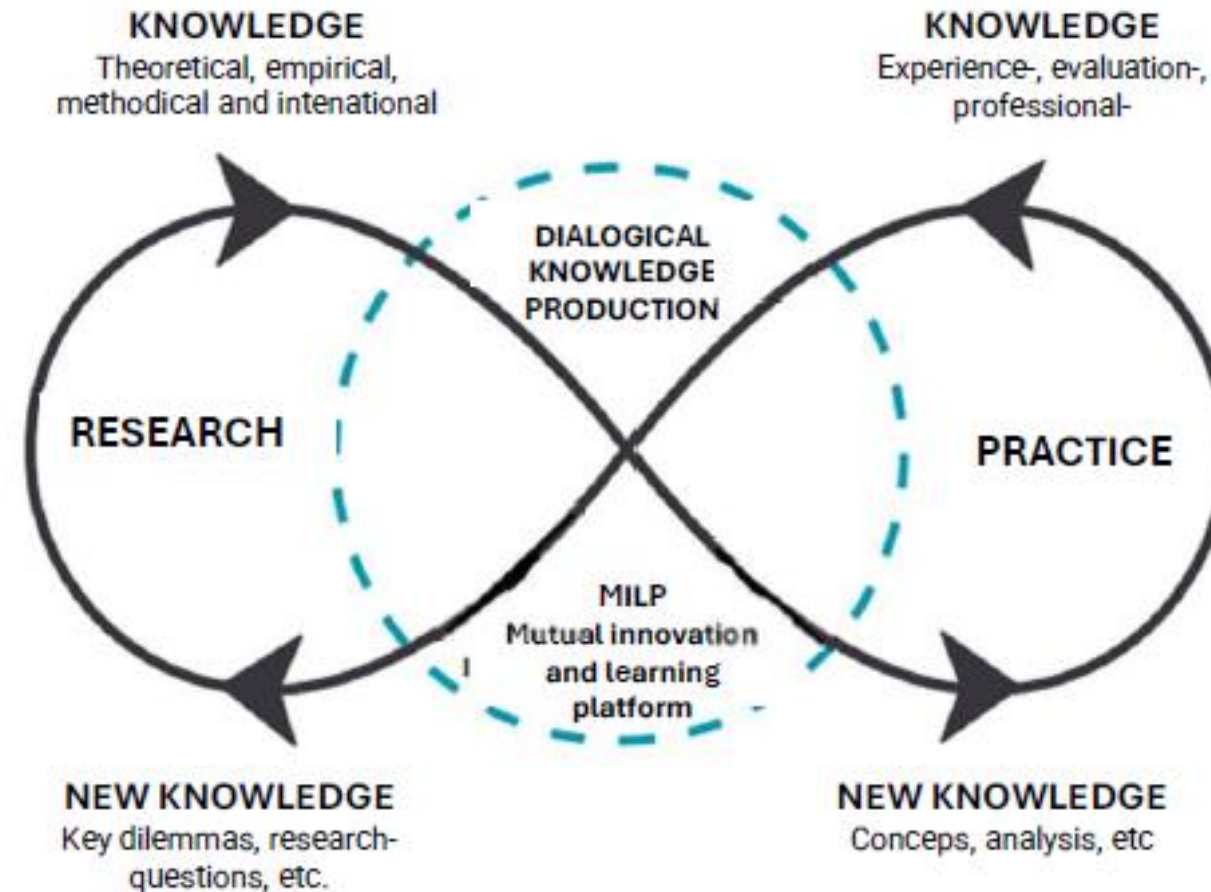
Ethnographic case studies in six Danish municipalities during seven years

- Observations of meetings between caseworkers and citizens (150+)
  - MILP - 2-4 hours with citizens, case-workers, managers, politicians with starting point in the pillars
  - Observations of meetings (management meetings, team meetings, etc.) –around 200 observations
  - Interviews with managers, staff and citizens
  - Seminars for knowledge brokers – both in the municipalities and as two-day seminars across the municipalities
  - Seminar for managers across municipalities (annually)
  - And MUCH more
- FULD and OPEN access in all the participating municipalities



# What we thought was a methodological approach turned out to be a potential for organisational development....

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## Research-based knowledge has the potential to inform and improve the quality of welfare services

- Thus, it is an important task to create, collect, and mobilize relevant knowledge
- Our ambition in CUBB is to move from knowledge transfer to knowledge mobilization.



# We mobilize knowledge through knowledge brokers

- A knowledge broker acts as an intermediary between (producers of) scientific knowledge and (employees in) a given practice
- A knowledge broker facilitates the production, sharing, and application of knowledge in practice
- Today we have a group of 70 knowledge brokers.



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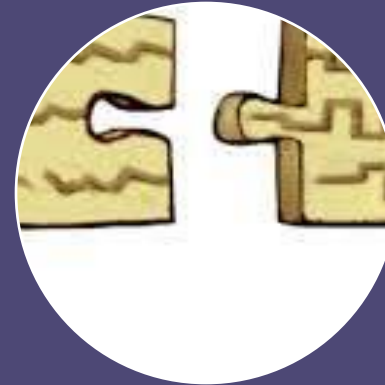
The perspective and voice of the client



The user-involving meeting and conversation



Employer engagement



Development of integrated services across sectors, departments and units



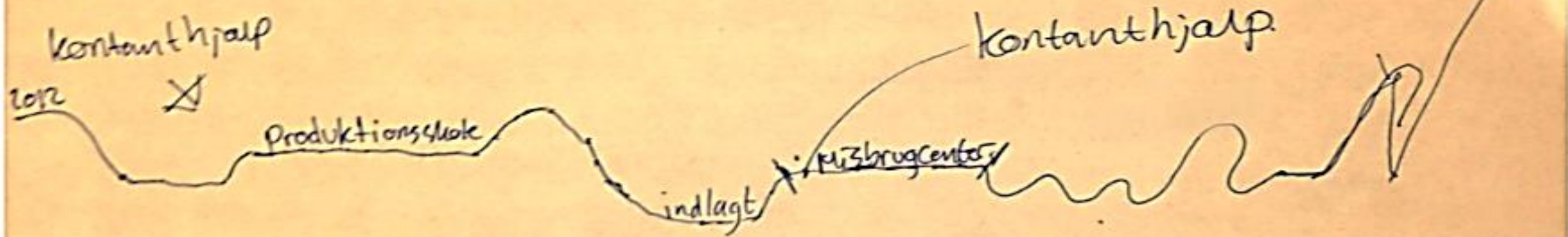
Local policy, organizational strategies and management

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# Aspects of understanding the citizens' perspective include:

- The non-linear processes
- Time experiences
- Dreams, wishes (faith in the citizen)
- Anger, etc.

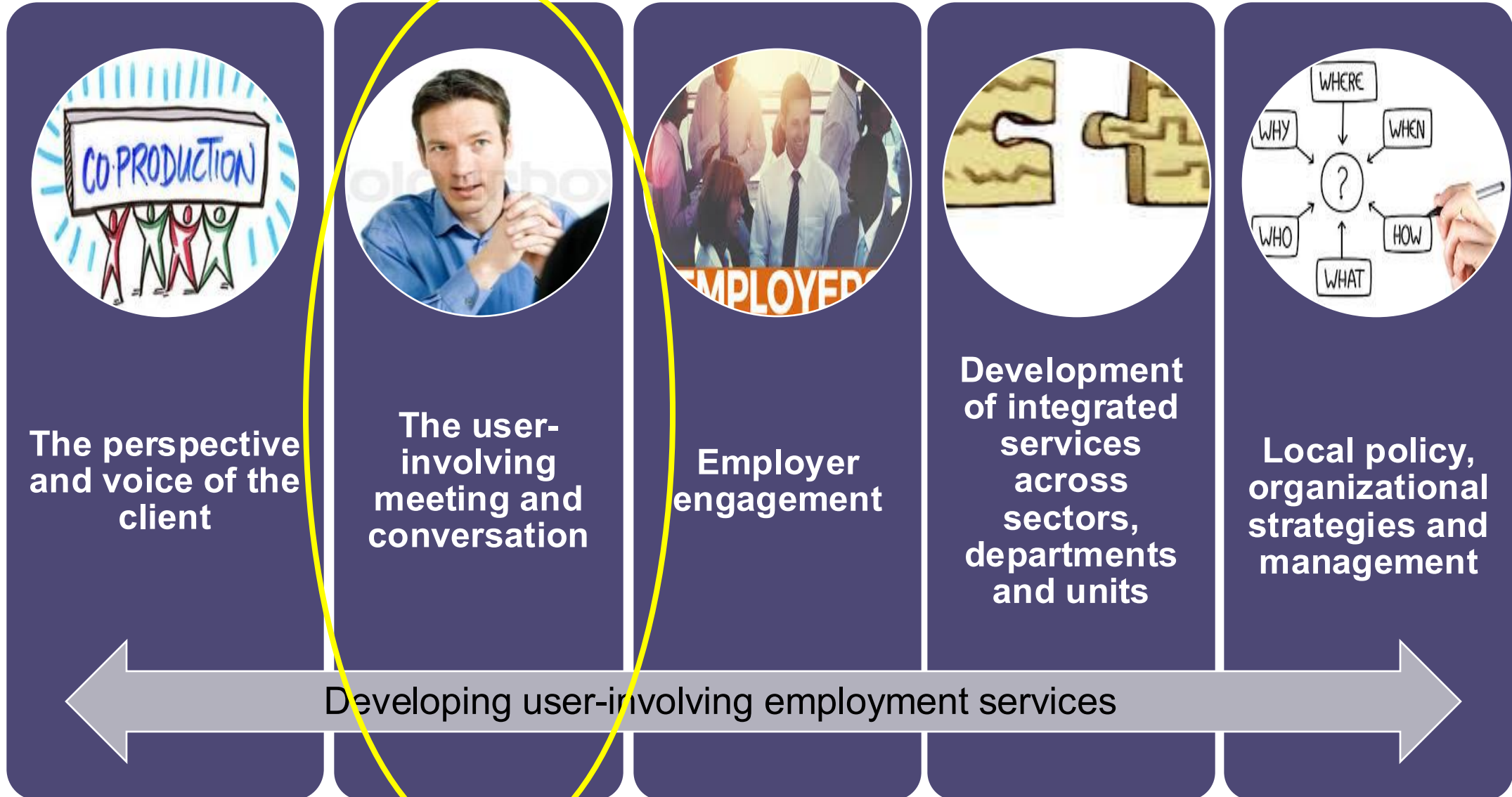




Timing is crucial when deciding when to and how to help citizens.



# From single-interventions (projects) to system innovation



# Citizen involvement happens in the encounter and conversation with the citizen

- ▶ **Citizen involvement is therefore also about “catching”,** which means identifying how citizens’ often implicit and hesitant wishes and dreams can be aligned with a concrete labor market perspective within the flow of necessary institutional dialogues.
- ▶ **Employees’ competencies are crucial for good conversations, and they are best strengthened through the opening of the professional space and collegial sparring.** That is, through a mastery culture (as opposed to a culture of rivalry, cf. Nerstad).
- ▶ **Sociological conversation analysis:** Catching, sanction communication, use of personal pronouns, information transfer vs. understanding, use of citizens’ names, etc.



# From single-interventions (projects) to system innovation



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# The companies can be seen as both means and ends to user involvement

## Focus on the right match (with inspiration from Supported Employment/IPS):

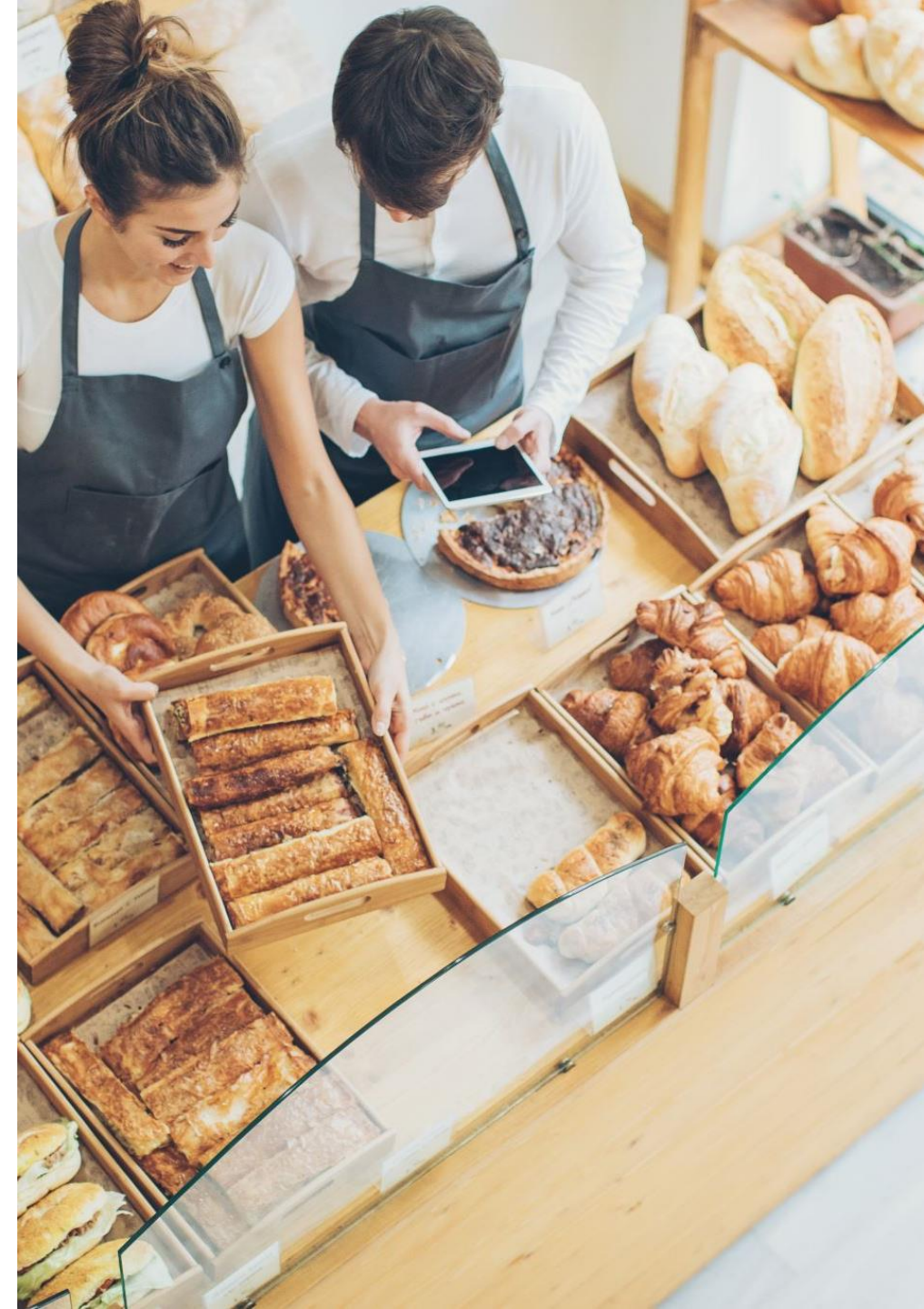
- The corporate cooperation with building employer engagement, good citizen careers and subsequent jobs is about relational, procedural and contextual conditions.
- Development of the good match should be seen as a professional competence of the frontline worker.

## From workplace training to job:

- Employers' expectations and active participation
- Citizens' motivation to be an intern

## Corporate service and contact:

- **Workplace capacity for inclusion** (the practical and social ability of a workplace to include people with work ability challenges in employment – something PES can assist and develop, often inherent in practical inclusion processes).



# From single-interventions (projects) to system innovation



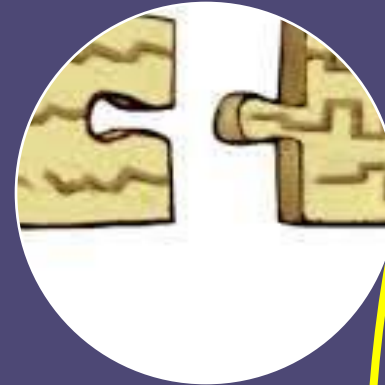
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# Local policy, organizational strategies and management

- User involvement can only be realized if it is **strategically grounded** (formulated vision) at the political level and in the organization
- **Management is a decisive parameter** in such a change!
- **Transformational management/leadership (vision-driven)**



**The level of ambition for co-creation and user involvement must be agreed upon**

## **Co-production**

→ Focus is on the production of services

## **Co-creation**

→ Focus is on what provides value for citizens

Larsen, F. & Caswell, D. (2022). Co-creation in an era of welfare conditionality: Lessons from Denmark. In: Journal of Social Policy. 51, s. 58-76 .





# The view on the citizen must be balanced between 'beings' and 'becomers'

Wright (2016) distinguishes between two extremes in the understanding of citizens within ALMP:

**Citizens as becomers**, seen as passive objects, who must be activated using the demands and efforts that the system delivers. The system shapes the citizens. Related to paternalism: We know what is best for the citizens.

**Citizens as beings**, who act (as all humans do) in their own life. It is this activity that can be directed towards the citizens acting more in accordance with fulfilling their own hopes or dreams. The question becomes how interventions can support this.



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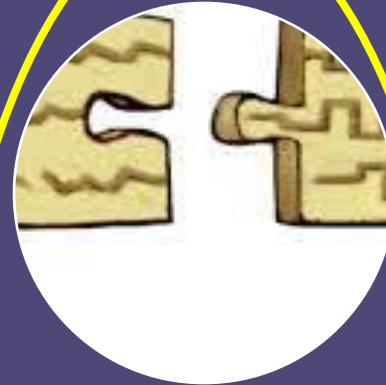
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# Citizens' needs require collaborate governance and integrated services

- **Vulnerable citizens often need help from different actors:** Public agencies, private actors, volunteers, networks and/or family
- The citizens who succeeded talks about cracking the "system code" of the public system (i.e., **the citizens' bureaucratic competences** become decisive to obtain help).
- **Need for new organizational models and change of cultures – Collaborative governance as the answer?**



# Learning from CUBB in relation to Collaborate governance

There are all kinds of pitfalls related to legislation, economy, stakeholders' vested interests, stereotypical perceptions of each other, etc., but two things have truly changed both intra- and inter-organizational collaboration:

- **Shared understanding of a common vision of user involvement**
- **The work on developing a professional foundation for this.** It's clearly an advantage that this work begins where you least expect it and with those toward whom the stereotypes are strongest – namely in Public Employment Services/job centers. Creates greater curiosity about each other's work.



**Thank you for listening!**